



## MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING CENTER

METC • MSU-Northern • P.O. Box 7751

Havre, MT 59501 • FAX: (406) 265-3570 • Phone: (406) 265-3763

January 26, 2009

Senator Kelly Gebhardt  
Chair, Natural Resources Committee  
Montana Senate  
P.O. Box 200500  
Helena, MT 59620-0500

RE: Senate Bill 102 – Revise Public Water Supply Laws

Dear Senator Gebhardt,

As a professional in the water and wastewater industry in Montana for the past 16 years as a training and development specialist, university instructor, researcher, wastewater treatment plant operator, collection system operator, water treatment plant operator, distribution system operator and currently training center director I can attest to the importance of SB102 becoming law in Montana.

The legislature must give the Department of Environmental Quality clear authority to require public water and wastewater systems to repair significant system deficiencies that have the potential to adversely affect public health or the environment.

When asked by a water and sewer system in Montana if I could help get its water and sewer systems up to par I could not believe how many significant deficiencies needed immediate attention. Had it not been for many DEQ personnel and their knowledge and ability to identify significant deficiencies, to provide me the information I needed to make proper decisions, and educate the systems' water and sewer district board I would not have made the progress I did as an operator in working to correct the significant deficiencies. From the standpoint of an operator who has gone in and tried to repair and right significant deficiencies that have been let go by a system for a period of time it is imperative that DEQ personnel know without a doubt that they have clear authority to require repair of significant deficiencies in Montana's water and wastewater systems for the protection of public health and the environment. It is also imperative that once DEQ personnel make such requirements of a system that DEQ is able to provide the training and technical assistance the system needs to make the repairs or upgrades.

The legislature must also clean up the language of this law so as to not jeopardize the primacy status Montana has regarding the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and other federal drinking water rules. If Montana loses primacy then the Environmental Protection Agency will enforce the rules in Montana which is something those of us who have worked long and hard in the water and wastewater industry in Montana do not want to see happen.

This ruling must also be clear so that those of us providing training to Montana's water and wastewater systems can say without a doubt that we know that by Montana law a water or wastewater system must address significant deficiencies that have the potential to adversely affect public health or the environment.



I strongly urge you to bring SB102 to the legislature for a passing vote.

Sincerely,



Barbara Coffman  
Interim Director  
Montana Environmental Training Center  
MSU-Northern  
P.O. Box 7751  
Havre, MT 59501  
406-781-2298 cell phone  
406-265-3763 office phone

Cc: Senators – Debby Barrett, Ken Hansen, Christine Kaufman, Jim Keane, Gary Perry, Jim Peterson, Donald Steinbeisser, Mitch Tropila, David Wanzenried, Rick Ripley, Jerry Black and Ken Hansen. Representatives - Russell Bean, Llew Jones, Bob Bergren and Roy Hollandsworth.